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WHOLE NO. 2048.

Poetry.

From the Household words. PASSING CLOUDS.

Where are the swallows fled?
Faint and dead,
Perchance, upon some blank and stormy shore,
O dreaming heart!
Far o'er the purple sea,
They wait in many a case,
The balmy southern breeze,
To bring them to their southern home once more.
Why must the flowers die?
Poisoned they lie
In the cold tomb bereft of tear or rain,
O dreaming heart!
They only sleep below
While winter winds shall blow;
To breathe and smile upon you soon again.
The sun hath hid his rays
These many days;
Will dewy hours leave the earth?
O dreaming heart!
The stormy clouds on high
Veil the same sunny sky,
That soon for spring is nigh;
Shall waste the summer into golden mirth.
Fair hope is dead, and light
Is quenched in night,
What sound can break the silence of despair?
O dreaming heart!
The sky is overcast,
Yet stars shall rise at last,
Brighter for darkness past,
And angels' silver voices stir the air.

Choice Miscellany.

BEN BOLT & SWEET ALICE.

"Oh, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?
Sweet Alice, whose hair was so brown,
Who blushed with delight when you gave her a smile,
And trembled with fear at your own frown."

"In the old church yard in the valley, Ben Bolt,
In a corner obscure and alone,
They have found a slab of the granite so gray,
And sweet Alice lies under the stone."

"Don't you remember?" Are those

three magic words—a key wherewith we

may unlock the floodgates of the heart,

and send the sweet waters of the past

over the plains and down the hills of that

fair land known in our heart's experience

as by-gone? Even so. There rise be-

fore our visions of time when the bright

deep eyes of the young spring gazed

slyly upon us from beneath the emine

ment of winter—when the blue violets

stole their first tint from the azure sky

above—when cowslips of sunny May

and the golden hearted buttercup first

jeweled the slender blades of grass; and

the hawthorn grew white with its bloss-

oms—when we ramed the woods the

whole of that long, warm, loveable June

holiday, weaving garlands, and listen-

ing to the concert of birds in that dark

misletoe wreathed, oaken forest. There

was one in years ago that prayed,

"Lord, keep my memory green;" and

the clinging tendrils of our hearts goes

back ever yearningly to this prayer.

But green and fresh as the poet's pray-

er, had the heart of Ben Bolt been kept.

From his early boyhood to the hour he

sat by his old friend, and listened to the

by-gone days. Not through the glass,

darkly, did he review those scenes of

the boy heart, to others of childhood.

There was a little old red schoolhouse,

with its dusty windows, and desk that

had been nicked many a time trying

poor ones to tremble; its rows of boys and

girls with their heads bent attentively

downward to their books and slates, the

wild winter wind sang and whistled with-

out, and some few childish hearts tried to

find words for its mournful notes. They

were too young and happy to know in

its wail, yet did they learn it in after years.

Then there came a few light, round

snow balls, so tiny that it must have been

the sport of the snow spirits, in their

rich revels, changing by and by to feath-

ery flakes that danced about ever gaily.

How the children's eyes grew bright as

they looked at one another, and thought

of the merry rides down hill, and the

snow balling that would make the play-

ground ring again. The last lessons

"No one goes your way, Alice, does

there?"

"No, I guess not, Ben," she replied,

in her fine, bird-like tones.

"Let me carry you home."

"Oh, no, I'm too heavy to be carried

so far," and she laughed low and sweet-

ly.

"Heavy! no, you're just like a thistle

down, or a snow flake, Ally: I could

carry you to England and back again

without being at all fatigued," and he

tossed the little girl in his arms.

"No, no; let me go; the boys will

laugh at you, Ben," and she struggled.

"What do I care? They may

laugh at Ben Bolt as they like," and

the brave boy drew back the chestnut curls

from his brow, fair forehead, and drew

himself up proudly; "but I did not mean

to frighten you, Alice," he continued,

as he saw how the little girl trembled.

So he put on her bonnet and cloak,

and Ben took her in his arms as if she

was a bird, while the tiny little thing

nestled down on his shoulder, as he went

stumbling through the snow, saying gay,

pleasant things that made the little thing

laugh; and when, at length, he opened

her mother's cottage door, he placed her

on the floor, saying:

"There, Mrs. May, I brought Alice

home lest she should get buried in a snow

bank, she's such a weeny thing," and

before Mrs. May could thank him he was

out of sight.

What a brave and glorious snow-storm

it was, though, dipping the great chunks

of snow into water to harden them, so

they rolled large snow balls for a pyra-

mid, until it was higher than the school-

house.

They worked bravely, but the bright-

est and pleasant face among them was

Ben Bolt's. Such rides as they had

down the hill, and though the larger

boys and girls said Alice May was too

little and timid to join them, because

she felt fearful of them, yet Ben Bolt

took her in his arms, and away they

went as merrily as any of the rest.

But the winter began to wane, and

now and then a soft day would come,

and lesson the pyramid and snow house

materially. "Such a pity!" they said,

and wished winter would last always,

but there was one little wren-like voice

that prayed for violets and blue-birds.

The pyramid tumbled down, the snow

grew thinner, and the boys jested

about its being on the decline, until one

day it disappeared—faded away, like so

many of their childish hopes.

The glad spring came with its larks

and daisies, and one day the children

went a Maying. Kate Ashley was queen,

and a brilliant queen she was, too. But

Ben Bolt gathered wild violets and

braided them in the soft curls of Alice,

and told her that she was sweeter, dear-

er than a thousand May Queens like

Kate. Child as she was, his words made

the sunbright brighter, and lent enchan-

ment to the atmosphere of her very ex-

istence.

Then the long June days came, enoir-

ing the green earth with her coronal

of roses, and making it redolent with

long time, Ben; ever since the day you

brought me home through the snow—

do you remember?"

He did remember, and with one pas-

sionate burst of grief, he pressed the lit-

tle girl to his bosom; and the brave

hearted boy sobbed the farewell he could

not find words for.

But, five years are not always a life

time. True it was to the quiet, thought-

ful Charles Allen, whose large, dark

eyes, had stolen brilliancy from his books;

and the laughing little Bell Archer—

both were laid to sleep in the same old

church-yard, where the night stars shone

over the graves. Others went to seek a

fortune in the gay world, and some

grew into miniature men and women by

their own sweet freights; but Alice May

was still a child. Yet she was a little

uller and bersight form gracefully devel-

oped; but there was the same angel look-

ing through her eyes as had watched

there in olden days. She had stayed at

home now to assist her mother in sewing,

their chief support; but she was the same

sweet Alice that Ben Bolt had car-

ried through the snow.

Ben Bolt had come back. How

strange that five years should have passed

so quickly, and stranger still that this

tall, handsome sailor should be Ben Bolt.

Kate Ashley was not thinking of sweet

Sabbath day rest as the chime of the

church bell floated through the village;

there she stood before the mirror arrang-

ing her curls, and fastening her dainty

bonnet, with its white ribbons and droop-

ing blue bells, thinking if she could not

fascinate Ben with her sparkling eyes, it

it would be delightful to have his chief

attention during the day.

He thought she did not look beautiful,

as he sat, before service, looking on the

olden faces; but there was a fairer one

than hers, he fancied he saw the sweet

face Alice May, with the half closed

eyes, and the long golden edged lashes

shadowing the pale cheek. He carried

in his bosom a curl like the one nestling

so softly by her temple, and it was a tal-

isman, keeping him from the enchan-

ment of other eyes.

When the service was closed, Ben was

thronged by old familiar faces—they had

so much to say, so many things to speak

of, so much to express of his safe return,

that it bewildered him. It was very

pleasant to be so warmly welcomed by

old friends, delightful to chat of by-

gones, and indeed a Sabbath of joy to Ben

Bolt.

Sweet Alice! Ah, how long and

weary the time had been to her. Some-

times her heart died within her as she

thought of the broad ocean; but when

she looked so shyly at Ben that morning

and saw how handsome he had grown,

a heart-sickness came over her, and the

sunshine fell but dimly at her feet.

She knew she had hidden away in the

depth of her pure heart, a wild early

love, and she strove to put it from her;

for would he think of her now? So, it

was no wonder she should slip her slender

hand in her mother's and steal quiet

from the joyous throng.

It was Sabbath eve—ore of those

al, for beside the altar was the grave

yard.

They were not wanting who wonder-

ed at Ben Bolt's choice, and thought it

strange he should take Alice May in

preference to the fairest and wealthiest.

Some there were who held their heads

lofty when they passed her, but her heart

was on the blue waters and she heeded

it not.

How she watched the summer days

in their passing. She noted how the

summer waned—how the fields of wav-

ing grain grew yellow in the sunlight—

she heard the voices of the reapers—

and when the leaves were falling the

children went out gathering in the woods;

when the noiseless snow fell, and lay on

the hill side, as in olden days, until the

genial spring tide sun melted it away and

the violets and hare-bells dotted the fields.

So passed the year. She was growing

fairer and more beautiful, too brilliant

for anything earthly. Once she knelt at

the altar in the little church, and listen-

ed to the words uniting her with the Sa-

viator's redeemed on earth; but it was only

an outward form, for heart had long

been in the keeping of angels. Again

she watched the waning of the summer

days, and when the soft wind swept over

the silvery rye fields, she thought of the

ocean afar with its broad waves. All

through the winter she grew more spirit-

ual in her beauty, and the slender white

hands were often folded on her breast,

and she prayed for those who she knew

would soon be left destitute, for she knew

she was dying.

It did not startle her; for she had felt

long ago that the fair, green earth would

hold her pulseless heart, ere it had left

the cloister of girlhood. Life was sweet

and beautiful, and in her sinlessness,

death had no agony, saved her sorrow

for those left in loneliness. It was only

a very little way to the land of rest, and

her feet, had never grown weary; yet she

longed to look once more upon the

flowers and have them braided in her

hair; and so she lingered till the voice

of spring was heard upon the hill tops.

One morning when viewless hands

were gathering back the misty curtains

of the night and the stars grew dim in

the glory of early morn, Alice stood on

the threshold of Paradise, and the gold-

en gates were opened to the fair, meek

girl. There trembled on her lips a pray-

er and a blessing for Ben Bolt and her

mother, giving radiance to her fair dead

face, and they braided spring flowers in

her brown hair.

The church bell chimed softly to the

years earth had claimed the stainless soul

of Alice May as they brought the coffin

in the little old church. How beautiful